

Message Text

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73

ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 H-02 OC-05 CCO-00 SCA-01 /009 W

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P 312110Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 548

UNCLAS LA PAZ 3353

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC CGEN BL

SUBJECT: EMBASSY/SCS HANDLING OF CORRESPONDENCE ON
W/W CASES

1. DUE TO INCREASED CONSULAR WORKLOAD THERE HAVE BEEN OCCASIONAL LENGTHY DELAYS ON OUR PART IN RESPONDING TO CORRESPONDENCE. HOWEVER, EMBASSY WISHES TO POINT TO LAG IN RECEIPT OF CORRESPONDENCE EITHER SENT DIRECTLY OR THROUGH DEPARTMENT. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES ARE: A. SENATOR MONDALE'S INQUIRY IN SANDERS CASE DATED FEB 23, 1976, WAS FORWARDED BY DEPT ONE MONTH LATER UNDER COVER OM OF MARCH 24, 1976, AND NOT RECEIVED IN LA PAZ UNTIL APRIL 14; B. CONGRESSMAN GEORGE M. O'BRIEN'S LETTER CONCERNING CUSTODY CASE OF STEVEN MICHEL WAS DATED MARCH 15, 1976 RECEIVED AT EMBASSY MARCH 29, 1976; C. CONGRESSMAN SIDNEY YATE'S LETTER OF FEBRUARY 2, 1976 FORWARDED SIX WEEKS LATER UNDER COVER OF DEPT OM DATED MARCH 11, 1976 RECEIVED AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MARCH 24.

2. WE WILL DO BETTER HENCEFORTH IN TAKING PROMPT ACTION HERE. IT ALSO IS EVIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT TOO MUCH TIME PASSES BETWEEN RECEIPT OF A CONGRESSIONAL LETTER IN WASHINGTON AND ITS TRANSMISSION TO THE FIELD. NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO WAIT TWO MONTHS OR MORE TO GET AN ANSWER TO A LEGITIMATE INQUIRY.

3. I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST A CHANGE IN THE PROCEDURE FRO HANDLING CORRESPONDENCE INVOLVING AMERICAN PRISONERS ABROAD. THE CONSULATE ROUTINELY SENDS REPORTS TO
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STATE (SCS) WHEN AN AMERICAN CITIZEN HAS BEEN ARRESTED, SO THE DEPT HAS AN INITIAL DATA BASE FROM WHICH TO RESPOND TO CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRIES. RATHER THAN FORWARD THE INQUIRY BY OM, THE DEPT COULD ASCERTAIN WHAT INFORMATION IS MISSING, REQUEST IT OF THE POST BY TELEGRAM AND THEN TELEPHONE THE CONGRESSMAN'S OFFICE. THE EMBASSY, IN TURN, WOULD SEND A FOLLOW-UP TELEGRAM TO STATE ANYTIME THERE IS A CHANGE IN THE STATUS OR WELFARE OF AN AMERICAN PRISONER. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS APPROACH MIGHT NOT BE DESIRABLE IN THE CASE OF A NEARBY POST (E.G., BORDER POSTS) WITH A MASSIVE CONSULAR LOAD WHERE POUCH SERVICE MAY BE ALMOST AS QUICK AS CABLE TRAFFIC AND PERHAPS BE MORE DESIRABLE IN OTHER WAYS.

4. THE DEPT COULD ALSO BE MOST HELPFUL IN IDENTIFYING LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS AND SHORT-STOPPING THESE RATHER THAN FORWARDING ALL TO THE POST.

5. FINALLY, IT APPEARS THAT SCS HAS PUT US ON A ONE-MONTH FOLLOW-UP SCHEDULE, WHICH MEANS THAT ORDINARILY THE EMBASSY WILL HAVE TAKEN ACTION, BUT THE DEPT WILL NOT HAVE RECEIVED THE POST'S REPLY WHEN THE FOLLOW-UP IS MADE, GIVEN THE APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH ROUND TRIP TRANSIT TIME FOR POUCH MAIL. SUGGEST YOU SPARE US THE TICKLE FOR SIX WEEKS IF WE ARE GOING TO MAINTAIN THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF DOING THINGS.
STEDMAN

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NNN

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